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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI IMMEDIATE 2538
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CHENNAI 000363

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/18/2017

TAGS: [CASC IN KISL PGOV PTER](#)

SUBJECT: BOMBING AT HISTORIC MOSQUE IN HYDERABAD KILLS FIVE

Classified By: Rohit Nepal, Reasons 1.4(a), (d), and (e)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: A bomb exploded at Hyderabad's historic Mecca Masjid, the city's oldest and largest mosque, today at approximately 1:25 p.m. local time, killing five people and injuring many others. The bomb detonated during Friday prayers when the mosque was filled with up to 10,000 worshippers. There have been no reports of American citizens killed or injured in the blast. The attack is part of a disturbing trend of attacks on Muslim targets in India. Although the perpetrators of these attacks are not known, the methods used suggest jihadi extremists who may be trying to isolate India's Muslims from the mainstream. END SUMMARY.

5 DEAD IN BOMB ATTACK ON HYDERABAD'S MOST IMPORTANT MOSQUE

¶2. (SBU) Police and government of Andhra Pradesh sources confirmed to post that a bomb exploded at approximately 1:25 p.m. local time at Hyderabad's largest and most historic mosque, the Mecca Masjid. A journalist source said that the bomb detonated during Friday prayers, when there were approximately 8,000 to 10,000 worshippers in the mosque. Police and government sources confirmed that five people were killed. Prabhakar Reddy, Additional Secretary to the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, said that there are at least twenty-five casualties. There has been no claim of responsibility for the attack.

¶3. (SBU) The police responded to the attack by quickly sealing off the area of the mosque in order to maintain control of the scene and preserve evidence. Prabhakar Reddy told post that three unexploded devices were discovered and defused by the police bomb squad. A journalist present at the scene told post the police were using tear gas and lathi charges to keep people from entering the mosque. He said that scene outside of the mosque was tense. According to media reports, people outside the mosque threw rocks at the police.

NO INDICATIONS AMCITS KILLED OR INJURED;
WARDEN MESSAGE ISSUED

4 (SBU) Prabhakar Reddy told post that there is no indication that American citizens or westerners were killed or injured in the attack. Hyderabad is home to a small number of traditional American expatriates and a much larger community of ethnic Indian-American citizens, of which a majority are Muslim. Most American citizens in Andhra Pradesh, especially those of Indian heritage, do not register with the Consulate. There are less than one thousand U.S. citizens registered, but post believes that the total number of American citizens in the state is somewhere between three and ten times the small number of actually registered. Post issued a warden message (cleared by Embassy New Delhi) to advise American citizens of the possibility of communal violence and to avoid travel in the area around Mecca Masjid and Charminar.

SITUATION SHOULD REMAIN UNDER CONTROL

15. (C) Dr. R.K. Raghavan, a security consultant with Tata Consultancy Services and former Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation, said that he believed the Andhra Pradesh police will maintain control over the situation and that continuing communal violence is unlikely. He noted that the Hyderabad Commissioner of Police, Balwinder Singh, is a former CBI colleague who is very competent and, as a Sikh,

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has the advantage of not belonging to either the Hindu or Muslim communities which have a history of violence between them. An official with Andhra Pradesh's elite anti-naxalite Greyhound unit agreed, saying that the Hyderabad police had the situation well under control. He added additional units of the Hyderabad police are stationed near the Mecca Masjid on all Fridays and were immediately available to deal with the aftermath of the bombing.

DISTURBING TRENDS

16. (C) This latest attack on Muslims in the Mecca Masjid follows two other deadly attacks on primarily Muslim targets in India in the past nine months, in Malegaon in September 2006 and on the Samjhauta Express train to Pakistan in February 2007. They also follow the grenade blasts at the Jama Masjid in Delhi which exploded harmlessly in April 2006. In each case, the Indian government at the most senior levels appealed to the populace for calm and to avoid communal recriminations of a religious nature. In each case, the assailants remain unknown. What is clear is that someone is deliberately targeting Muslims. The other worrisome trend is that terrorism has now spread from the North into the South. The shooting at the Indian Institute for Sciences in Bangalore, the disruption of a Lashkar-e-Tayiba sleeper cell in Mysore, and other arrests last year in Hyderabad make it pretty clear that the South will now have to be as suspicious and on-edge as the cities of the North.

WHODUNNIT?

17. (C) Speculation about the motives of the attackers abounds and includes the possibility of state-level political disputes, jihadi terrorism, communal disputes, and even local conflict between traders. The two primary suspects are Muslim Jehadi extremists or right wing Hindu fanatics. Police and intelligence sources rule out the latter, whom they say are certainly antithetical to Muslims but have never

previously shown any ability to assemble and detonate devices, or ever displayed a tendency to engage in terrorist attacks. Hindu groups usually pick up knives, cudgels, and crude firearms to wreak vengeance on innocent and unarmed Muslims during mob-rage incidents in communal riots. The sort of deliberate planning and technical skills inherent in these attacks does not fit their pattern. As for Jehadi groups, there is a growing sense of alarm here that they may be responsible, since they have the clear and proven ability to engage in these sorts of terrorist attacks and their cause is served by isolating Muslims further from the Indian mainstream and encouraging Muslims to blame their Hindu neighbors for the unattributed attacks.

TO WHAT PURPOSE?

18. (C) The clearest possible explanation for Muslims to kill Muslims is to isolate normally tolerant Indian Muslims further from the Indian mainstream, make them feel vulnerable and under siege, and draw them to look inward for answers. As Indian Muslims close ranks, the Jihadis must hope that tolerant currents in Indian Islam will be diluted or even eradicated, providing them with a steady stream of recruits from one of the largest Muslim populations in the world. Jehadi groups are using these tactics in Iraq among Sunnis, and they may now also be doing so in India. Jihadis believe the land of India needs to return to Muslim rule, and nothing would suit their purposes more than to create a vibrant,

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domestic Muslim insurgency across the length and breadth of India. In their minds, if Muslims have to die to achieve such a goal, it is an acceptable sacrifice. Such attacks also serve to sharpen the Indian divide with Pakistan, eroding the peace process which has caused so much discomfort for Jihadis in their safe harbor in Pakistan. If such attacks disrupt efforts by Delhi and Islamabad, the groups hope that their short leash will be loosened. Ultimately, Muslim extremists hope to not only end the peace process but incite an India/Pakistan war that will in their minds settle the India/Pakistan conflict once and for all. They fully expect that Indian Muslims to join a jihad that they hope will eradicate India's secular government and "raise the green flag of Islam over the red fort in Delhi."

THE CHALLENGE FOR INDIA

19. The challenge for the politicians, government, and security services of India is manifold. Every effort must continue to be made to make Muslim citizens feel empowered, safe, and relevant. The Indian government must proceed with efforts to give Muslims the additional help they need to secure the benefits of India's growing economy and pluralistic political system. Divisive rhetoric from Hindu and Muslim extremists alike must be muzzled. Politicians and leaders must continue to call on all Indians not to fall into the trap of religious recrimination, reviving the horrors of communal violence that has killed millions in Partition and since. Security agencies must never forget that not every Muslim is a bad Muslim, and that they must show greater sensitivity and a lighter touch even as they weed out the bad apples. Security agencies must also learn to recruit Muslims who can do a better job than the current crop to infiltrate domestic networks. Finally, India has to continue to proceed with rapprochement with Pakistan, in order to ensure Islamabad's firm check on the terrorist groups there. India's great advantage in all this is a free and vibrant press and a transparent and robust democracy, which allows Muslims greater freedoms than in any other Muslim majority or plurality country on earth.

The Indian peoples' natural predilection for tolerance must rule the day if India is to avoid the terrorists' sustained desire to spark the flames of ethnic conflagration in this massive country. Muslim extremists based in Pakistan have failed to appreciate the reality of India's Muslims. Despite closer relations between India and Pakistan and closer personal interaction, many Pakistani Muslims continue to believe that Indian Muslims are an oppressed minority waiting for "liberation" by their Pakistani brethren. They could not be further from the truth, as the failure of each terrorist attack to set-off a communal conflagration demonstrates. It is a characteristic of fanaticism that it refuses to accept overwhelming evidence contrary to long-held beliefs. That is why, despite the repeated failure of Islamic extremism in India, we can expect the attacks to keep on coming.

10. This message was coordinated with Embassy New Delhi.
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